

# **CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

**Discussion Highlights Tuesday,  
March 18, 2008**

---

## **I. Council Member Introductions**

- Council Members introduced themselves.

## **II. Secretary Belshé Opening Remarks**

- The California Child Welfare Council (CWC) is a unique undertaking to support the best outcomes for our children who come into foster care. It recognizes that improving outcomes for these children is a shared responsibility. It's not the responsibility of one particular level of government or agency, but shared among multiple systems and the courts and across the different programmatic disciplines that serve children, youth and families with an eye toward improving safety, permanency and well being of California children.
- The goals for the March 18, 2008, and April 14, 2008, Council meetings included creating a platform for a series of workshops to provide the Council with ample opportunity to be educated regarding the significant issues and challenges identified and the development of a strategic framework to guide the Council's work.
- The development of the strategic framework would entail the consideration of vision and mission statements, guiding principles, core criteria by which challenge focus areas would be chosen, goals and objectives, and an organizational structure through which the Council would accomplish its work. The goal would be to consider and approve the strategic framework at the June Council meeting.
- The proposed approach to developing the strategic framework was not written in stone. There was an eagerness on the part of the Co-Chairs to solicit CWC Member thoughts on the process and to ensure that the development of framework is as Council-driven as possible

## **III. Justice Moreno Opening Remarks**

- The Child Welfare Council represents an historic moment in our state. It is premised on the need to bring all arms and all branches of our state leadership together to break down barriers and work collaboratively in enhancing services to California's struggling families and the staggering number of children who are part of the our foster care system.
- The Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, an interdisciplinary body of experts created in 2006 by the Chief Justice and the Judicial Council to help the courts to better serve children and families in the foster care system, has released its recommendations.

## **CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

**Discussion Highlights Tuesday,  
March 18, 2008**

---

- Facts learned by the Blue Ribbon Commission include that there are fewer than 150 full- and part-time judicial officers who preside over the state's entire dependency court system. Full-time judicial officers carry an average caseload of 1,000 cases, limiting time and attention any one case can receive. Hearings average only 10-15 minutes. The average caseload for attorneys who represent children and parents in court is 273 and in some counties is as high as 500-600. Often children and parents do not meet their attorneys until the day of their hearings which affects their right to speak in court and their understanding of the decisions made in court.
- The Blue Ribbon Commission recommendations fall into four categories: 1) prevention and permanency to help keep families together whenever safe and possible to do so and provide timely reunification or placement in another permanent home if removal is necessary; 2) court reform to change the way the courts do business; 3) better collaboration between the courts and our partners about the families and children we jointly serve; and 4) addressing funding issues by prioritizing children in foster care and their families when providing services and allocating resources.

#### **IV. Council Bylaws Consideration and Approval**

- Larry Bolton, Chief Counsel, California Department of Social Services (CDSS), summarized the proposed Council bylaws by which business would be conducted.
- Justice Vance Raye moved to adopt the bylaws.
- Miryam Choca seconded the motion.
- The Council unanimously approved the bylaws.

#### **V. Child and Family Services Review – Preliminary Findings from Exit Interview**

- CDSS Director John Wagner provided the Council with an overview of preliminary findings from the Federal exit interview for the Child and Family Services Review. There were seven areas out of fourteen around which California will likely need to develop a Program Improvement Plan. Council Members requested a list of the seven areas which will be identified by CDSS at a future meeting.

#### **VI. Council Member Outreach**

- The Co-Chairs will participate in a conference call with the Federal Government to update them on the Council's work.
- David Ambrose has been blogging about the Council.

## CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

### Discussion Highlights Tuesday, March 18, 2008

---

- Carroll Schroeder talked to participants at a conference about the Council's work to bridge California's multiple systems. Recommendations involved serving children who fall through the cracks; ensuring foster youth have access to mental health services; and expanding substance abuse treatment capacity for parents and children involved in the foster care.
- Michael Kriletich talked about the difficulty in accessing school records, providing aftercare services for youth release from probation, and reducing reentries.
- Will Lightbourne cited three top priorities: 1) caseloads; 2) prevention, early intervention and aftercare; and 3) service priorities for foster children in systems represented on the Council.
- Trish Ploehn discussed the importance of aftercare and post-permanency care.
- Regina Deihl mentioned the challenges families face in accessing court, education and mental health systems which directly affects the ability of foster families to provide quality care and ensure placement stability.
- Secretary Belshé urged Council Members to continue to engage people beyond the Council including foster youth. She expressed appreciation to Teri Kook and the Stuart Foundation for a grant to the Council to engage foster youth in the Council's deliberations, as well as refreshments for meetings and support to access experts.
- Justice Moreno shared the Blue Ribbon Commission's practice of meeting with local courts to share the Commission's vision and learn about local initiatives to address challenges.

#### VII. Strategic Framework Development

- Karen Strickland outlined the proposed process for developing the Council's strategic framework. The March and April Council meetings would be devoted to educational workshops. During the afternoon session of the April meeting, the Council would begin deliberations on the core framework components articulated by the Secretary. These include mission and vision statements, guiding principles, challenge focus area criteria, the initial three challenge areas on which the Council would work, and the structure by which the work would be organized. It would be the goal to complete consideration of these core elements at the end of the meeting to enable Committees to meet prior to the June 18, 2008, Council meeting. At the June meeting, a draft strategic framework would be considered and approved. If this were to occur, the work of the Council could begin in the summer.
- Draft vision and mission statements, guiding principles and challenge focus areas core criteria were distributed to the Council for consideration. Initial Council

## CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL

Discussion Highlights Tuesday,  
March 18, 2008

---

feedback included: 1) amending the vision statement to speak to preparing youth for successful transition to adulthood; 2) strengthening the mission language; and 3) revising the core criteria to clarify that there may be both short-term and long-term issues that the Council should consider and the consideration of building upon existing work. Staff committed to incorporating this feedback and circulating a revised document.

- Council members requested additional information on CFSR areas in need of improvement and AB 2216 reporting requirements.

### VIII. Informational Items

- A series of three educational panels were presented on challenge focus areas selected by the Council that included access services (K-12 education, mental health, and substance abuse services); data and information sharing; transition age youth; and permanency and lifelong connections.
- The access to services panel, “Any Door, the Right Door: Collaborative Service Delivery Systems for Child, Youth and Family Well Being,” included Gordon Jackson, Director, Learning Support and Partnerships, California Department of Education; Will Lightbourne, Director, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency; Dr. Steve Mayberg, Director, Department of Mental Health; and Renee Zito, Director, California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. The learning goals of the panel included:
  - ✓ Providing a vision for an integrated, collaborative service delivery system;
  - ✓ Identifying key challenges and issues around accessing mental health, substance abuse and K-12 education services and supports for children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system including children and youth placed outside their county of jurisdiction;
  - ✓ Speaking to promising/existing initiatives including SB785, a new state law to increase access to mental health services;
  - ✓ Highlighting a local model best practice, “differential response,” that has helped prevent entries into care in Santa Clara County by connecting families to services and supports in the community.
- The data and information panel, “The Power of Data and Information Sharing,” included Michael Lawler, MSW, Ph.D., Director, UC Davis Center for Human Services; Barbara Needell, Ph.D., Research Specialist, Center for Social Services Research, UC Berkeley; Stephanie Romney, Ph.D., Office of Evaluation and Research, Community Behavioral Health Services, San Francisco Department of

## **CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

**Discussion Highlights Tuesday,  
March 18, 2008**

---

Public Health; and Don Will, Judicial Council of California. The learning goals of the panel included:

- ✓ Educating about how and what data and information currently is gathered, shared and used in the child welfare system;
  - ✓ Identifying key challenges and issues around linking child welfare, health, mental health, substance abuse, K-12 education and other system data and information both within systems serving families involved in the child welfare system (UC Davis, “Interagency Measurement of Child Well Being” Report to the California Department of Social Services) and the courts (BRC findings/recommendations);
  - ✓ Presenting an overview of the San Francisco Shared Youth Database, an example of one county’s multi-system database to provide multi-disciplinary team access to juvenile justice, mental health, child welfare, school and substance abuse data.
- The final panel, “Transition Age Youth, Permanency and Lifelong Connections,” included presentations by Karen Grace-Kaho, Ombudsman for Foster Care, CDSS; Cathi Huerta, Director, Fresno County Department of Children and Family Services; Marquita Jones, Children’s System of Care youth Task Force; Teri Kook, Senior Program Officer, Stuart Foundation; and Pat Reynolds-Harris, Founder, California Permanency for Youth Project. The learning goals of the panel were:
    - ✓ Present challenges in ensuring a successful transition to adulthood for youth emancipating from the foster care system and learn about lessons learned from the California Connected by 25 Initiative, a multi-county pilot project to develop collaborative systems of care to support emancipating and emancipated foster youth, ages 14 – 25 years;
    - ✓ Receive an overview of National Governor’s Association Transition Age Youth Initiative;
    - ✓ Increase the understanding of challenges and promising practices in ensuring that all children and youth involved in foster care and child welfare systems are connected to caring, committed lifelong adults, including early lessons learned under the California Permanency for Youth Project.
    - ✓ Present innovative practices from Fresno County, a California Connected by 25 Initiative & California Permanency for Youth site;
    - ✓ Provide personal perspectives from a youth about the challenges and lessons learned about emancipating from the foster care system.

## **CALIFORNIA CHILD WELFARE COUNCIL**

**Discussion Highlights Tuesday,  
March 18, 2008**

---

### **IX. Council Check In**

- The facilitator asked Council Members to offer their thoughts about the day. Council Members generally felt that the panels were particularly good and informative. There were several recommendations that future panels possibly be shortened in length with possibly fewer speakers.
- In speaking to the April 14, 2008, educational panel on relative caregivers, Regina Deihl recommended that the panel focus be broadened to incorporate challenges and issues faced by all caregivers including foster parents and adoptive parents.
- In response to Patrick Gardner's inquiry as to how challenge focus area panels were organized, Secretary Belshé explained that the educational panels were informed around what the Council articulated in terms of challenge focus areas at the November 2007 meeting.
- Justice Vance Raye suggested additional education efforts on the "big picture" such as how the various systems and parts within systems currently interact with each other. In addition, Justice Raye recommended that the judicial system receive some focus within the Council's future deliberation.

### **X. Adjournment**

- The meeting was adjourned by the Co-Chairs at 5:30 p.m.